



# +St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church

Antiochian Archdiocese of North America  
Metropolitan Saba of New York and all North America  
V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Borzghol, Pastor  
Dn. Nicholas Adranly

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## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2026; TONE 3 / EOTHINON 3 SUNDAY OF THE LAST JUDGMENT (MEAT FARE)

APOSTLE ONESIMOS OF THE SEVENTY; VENERABLE EUSEBIOS OF SYRIA; MARTYR MAJOR OF GAZA



On February 15 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate the Apostle Onesimos of the Seventy; Venerable Eusebios of Syria; and Martyr Major of Gaza. Today, we commemorate the Second and impartial Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the Sunday of the Last Judgment—known also as Meat Fare Sunday—the lesson of which occurs in today’s Holy Gospel. Jesus illustrates to us God’s ineffable goodness and His great love for mankind. And so lest some who are lazy should loiter and spend the time appropriate to their salvation in the pursuit of sin, and be suddenly overtaken by death, the divine Fathers decree that on this day the remembrance of the Second Appearance of Christ may be celebrated. The intention is to remind them that, as God is good and loving to mankind, He is also a very righteous Judge Who recompenses each according to his deeds. Our Lord teaches us that when we minister to our brother or sister, we really minister to Him. This brings us righteousness and life eternal.

### THE EPISTLE

*Sing praises to our God, sing praises.*

*Clap your hands, all ye peoples.*

### **The Reading from the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. (8:8-9:2)**

Brethren, food will not bring us closer to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better, nor if we do not eat, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this authority of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if any one sees you, as someone who has knowledge, reclining at a table in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of the one who is weak be emboldened to eat of the things sacrificed to idols, and through your knowledge the weak brother perishes, for whom Christ died? And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will not eat meat forever, lest I cause my brother to stumble. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of my apostleship are you in the Lord.

رَتَلُوا لِإِلَهِنَا رَتَلُوا. يَا جَمِيعَ الْأُمَمِ صَفِّقُوا بِالْأَيْدِي.

فَصَلِّ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِيسِ بُولْسِ الرَّسُولِ الْأُولَى إِلَى أَهْلِ كورِنْثُوسِ. (2:9-8:8)

يَا إِخْوَةَ، إِنَّ الطَّعَامَ لَا يُقَرِّبُنَا إِلَى اللَّهِ، لِأَنَّ إِنْ أَكَلْنَا لَا نَزِيدُ وَإِنْ لَمْ نَأْكُلْ لَا نَنْقُصُ. وَلَكِنْ انظُرُوا أَنْ لَا يَكُونَ سُلْطَانُكُمْ هَذَا مَعْتَرَةً لِلضُّعْفَاءِ. لِأَنَّهُ إِنْ رَأَى أَحَدٌ يَا مَنْ لَهُ الْعِلْمُ مُتَكِنًا فِي بَيْتِ الْأَوْثَانِ، أَفَلَا يَتَّقَى ضَمِيرَهُ، وَهُوَ ضَعِيفٌ، عَلَى أَكْلِ ذَبَائِحِ الْأَوْثَانِ، فَيَهْلِكُ بِسَبَبِ عِلْمِكَ الْأَخِ الضَّعِيفِ الَّذِي مَاتَ الْمَسِيحُ لِأَجْلِهِ؟ وَهَكَذَا إِذْ تُخْطِئُونَ إِلَى الْإِخْوَةِ وَتَجْرَحُونَ ضَمَائِرَهُمْ، وَهِيَ ضَعِيفَةٌ، إِنَّمَا تُخْطِئُونَ إِلَى الْمَسِيحِ. فَلِذَلِكَ إِنْ كَانَ الطَّعَامُ يُشْكِكُ أَخِي، فَلَا آكُلْ لِحَمَاءٍ إِلَى الْأَبَدِ لئَلَّا أُشْكِكَ أَخِي. أَلَسْتُ أَنَا رَسُولًا؟ أَلَسْتُ أَنَا حُرًّا؟ أَمَا رَأَيْتَ يَسُوعَ الْمَسِيحَ رَبَّنَا؟ أَلَسْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ عَمَلِي فِي الرَّبِّ؟ وَإِنْ لَمْ أَكُنْ رَسُولًا إِلَى آخَرِينَ، فَإِنِّي رَسُولٌ إِلَيْكُمْ. لِأَنَّ خَاتَمَ رِسَالَتِي هُوَ أَنْتُمْ فِي الرَّبِّ.

## THE GOSPEL

**The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (25:31-46)**

The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at His right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and feed Thee, or thirsty and give Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger and welcome Thee, or naked and clothe Thee? And when did we see Thee sick or in prison and visit Thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

## فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ متى الإنجيليِّ البشيرِ والتلميذِ الطاهرِ. (25:31-46)

قالَ الرَّبُّ: متى جاءَ ابْنُ البَشْرِ في مَجْدِهِ وجميعُ الملائكةِ القديسينَ مَعَهُ، فحينئذٍ يجلسُ على عرشِ مَجْدِهِ. وتُجمَعُ إليه كُلُّ الأممِ، فيُمَيِّزُ بَعْضَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ، كما يُميِّزُ الراعي الخرافَ مِنَ الجداءِ. ويُقيمُ الخرافَ عَنْ يَمِينِهِ والجداءَ عَنْ يساره. حينئذٍ يقولُ المَلِكُ للذينَ عن يَمِينِهِ: تَعَالَوْا يا مُبارَكِي أباي رثوا المَلِكَ المُعدَّ لَكُمْ مُنذُ إنشَاءِ العالَمِ، لأني جُعْتُ فأطعمتُموني، وعَطِشْتُ فسَقَيْتُموني، وكُنْتُ غريباً فأوَيْتُموني، وعُرِياناً فكَسَوْتُموني، ومَريضاً فَعُدْتُموني، ومَحْبوساً فَأَنْتَيْتُمَ إليَّ. حينئذٍ يُجيبُهُ الصِّدِّيقونَ قائلينَ: يا رَبُّ متى رأيناكَ جاعاً فأطعمناكَ، أو عَطِشانَ فَسَقَيْناكَ؟ ومتى رأيناكَ غريباً فأوَيْناكَ، أو عُرِياناً فَكَسَوناكَ؟ ومتى رأيناكَ مَريضاً أو مَحْبوساً فَأَنْتَيْنا إِيكَ؟ فيجيبُ المَلِكُ ويقولُ لَهُمْ: الحَقُّ أَقولُ لَكُمْ، بما أنَّكُمْ فَعَلْتُمْ ذَلِكَ بِأحدِ إِخوتي هؤُلاءِ الصِّغارِ فَبي فَعَلْتُمُوهُ. حينئذٍ يقولُ أيضاً للذينَ عَنْ يساره: إِذْهَبُوا عَنِّي يا مَلاعِينُ إلى النارِ الأبديةِ المُعدَّةِ لِإبليسَ وملائكَتِهِ. لأنني جُعْتُ فَلَمْ تُطْعِمُونِي، وعَطِشْتُ فَلَمْ تَسْقُونِي، وكُنْتُ غريباً فَلَمْ تُؤوُونِي، وعُرِياناً فَلَمْ تَكْسُونِي، ومَريضاً ومَحْبوساً فَلَمْ تَرُورُونِي. حينئذٍ يُجيبونَهُ هُمْ أيضاً قائلينَ: يا رَبُّ، متى رأيناكَ جاعاً أو عَطِشاناً أو غريباً أو عُرِياناً أو مَريضاً أو مَحْبوساً وَلَمْ نَخْدِمْكَ؟ حينئذٍ يُجيبُهُم قائلًا: الحَقُّ أَقولُ لَكُمْ، بما أنَّكُمْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا ذَلِكَ بِأحدِ هؤُلاءِ الصِّغارِ، فَبي لَمْ تَفْعَلُوهُ. فَيَذْهَبُ هؤُلاءِ إلى العذابِ الأبدِيِّ، والصِّدِّيقونَ إلى الحياةِ الأبديةِ.

### Upcoming Events

February 15th	1 year memorial on February 15th in memory of George Wahbeh. May his memory be eternal!
February 15th	General parish meeting
February 22nd	Ladies meeting; all are welcome to attend

### Coffee Hour

February 15 <sup>th</sup>	The Adranly Family for the good health of Dn. Nicholas
February 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Norma Khalil in memory of Randa and Charlie
March 8 <sup>th</sup>	3-year memorial for Mariam Khalil Munayer from Amal Ibrahim Munayer, Joseph, Stephen, Charlie, and Eden Munayer. May her memory be eternal!
March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Dudum, Deitzmann, and Morgan Families in memory of Jim and Rose Romley, Ray, Gloria and Brad Zachariah, and Sig Dietzmann. May their memory be eternal!
April 5 <sup>th</sup>	Palm Sunday. Bakesale instead of Coffee Hour
April 12 <sup>th</sup>	Pascha!

### Feb 15<sup>th</sup> Parish Meeting Zoom Link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88139478450?pwd=xqukWbYiCW0PKh7bc4BrqCnGLPEgre.1>

Use link above to view the parish meeting for the election of Parish Council members.

**Candidates on Ballot:** Elias Shaheen, Jimmy Juha, Nicole Yowakim, Jim Dudum

**Members Terms Expired:** Mathew Simon, Samir Yowakim, Charlene Nassoura \*(eligible to run again)

### Ladies Meeting

Ladies meeting on Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>. All are welcome to attend!

**Holy Oblations**

This week, Holy Oblations are offered by:

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nick Nicola, Sandy Dudum, George Messih, George Adranly, Fred Addas, Henriette Hilal, Souhad Halaka, George Cawog, Sam Nassab, Sue Gideon, Rocky Dudum and Norma Khalil.** Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Angel Husary** Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Nadia Frangieh** Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Bradley Yowakim.** Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **John Freij.** Many years!

† St. John Parish Family for the good health of **Suhad Halaka.** Many years!

**Candles for the altar table and in front of the icons of Christ and the Theotokos offered by:**

† Ibrahim Fasheh in memory of Hanada Fasheh for one full year. May her memory be eternal!



† Altar Servers:  
Nathan Sweis, Clayton Morgan, Elias Freij, Angelo Freij, Andrew Freij, Mazyn Haddadin, James Dudum, John Dudum, David Evans, Evan Kawar, Mason Kawar, Jonathan Juha, Maron Juha and Zaiden Karanikola

**Crab Feed: Thank You!**

Thank you to everyone who invested their labor, time, and God-given talents to make possible our Parish Crab Feed in our beautiful new hall! Many thanks to those who donated to the construction of our hall, and attended as guests to support us. Your contributions are greatly appreciated!

**Talent Show Meeting**

Talent Show meeting after church on March 1, in the admin building. Anyone who wants to participate in any way please be in attendance. It will not take long. We need people to serve refreshments, help with the production and Talent! It's not too late to sign up! Call Lynn Farradj 925-323-5746

**Annual Easter Egg Hunt**

Mark in your calendars: Saturday April 11th is our annual Easter Egg hunt event. After morning service. Anyone who would like to co-chair this fantastic event, please contact Rania Kashou asap 415.722.0774 or [raniamariekashou@gmail.com](mailto:raniamariekashou@gmail.com) More information to follow.



**St. John Orthodox Church  
501 Moraga Way  
Orinda, CA 94563**

You could use this QR code for your donation



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St. John The Evangelist Orthodox Church | 1.6.2026

# THANK YOU

*to the generous donors who made this Fellowship Hall possible,  
the Men's Fellowship, and the Festival Committee over the years.*

"...remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said  
it is more blessed to give than to receive."  
- Acts 20:35

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## THANK YOU



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**Thank you for your support at our Crab Feed!**





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**APRIL 11, 2026 | AFTER MORNING LITURGY**

**PETTING ZOO (12PM-2PM)**

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**Diocese of Los Angeles and  
the West 2026 Parish Life  
Conference**

**Marriott Marquis San Diego  
Marina (July 1st - 5th)**

**Host Parish: St. George  
Church (San Diego, CA)**



Happy New Year PLC Family!

We are so excited to kick off our 2026 Parish Life Conference in beautiful San Diego, CA, during the 250th anniversary of our great Nation! Thanks to all the wonderful feedback you've shared over the years, the CPCC has heard you and has made some meaningful changes to make the PLC more affordable this year and for the years to come. Below are some of the major changes that will be implemented:

- Due to the positive feedback from the 2025 PLC, **one full day** has been removed from the 2026 PLC and will remain that way for all future PLCs. This will create significant cost savings for our Clergy and their Parishes.
- The standard public room rate at the Marriott Marquis during the 2026 PLC weekend is approximately **\$450 per night**. Through CPCC negotiations and donor support, attendees will receive a **\$199 per night rate (plus taxes)** during one of the most expensive weekends of the year. The CPCC is also working hard to secure room rates below **\$199 per night** for the 2027 and 2028 PLCs.
- Ticket prices on all events this year will be **~20% lower** than 2025 prices

We can't wait to be together in July for a weekend full of events, fellowship, and meaningful time together! Thanks to the incredible room rate secured, the prime PLC location, and the holiday weekend, rooms are filling up earlier and at a higher rate than usual. We highly recommend booking your rooms early using the link below.

Additionally, there is **limited seating for our Saturday night event**, offering a front-row view of the San Diego Marina and the famous San Diego 4th of July firework show. Be sure to register and purchase your tickets as soon as possible to secure your spot.

On behalf of the CPCC, we wish you a very Happy New Year! May 2026 be filled with countless blessings for each of you. We look forward to seeing you in July!

## **The Fathers of the Church**

*By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

The Church has many saints, but not all of them are called “Church Fathers.” This title is given to a specific group of them. A “father” is the person capable of nurturing people in Christ, of giving birth to them and/or raising them. Hence, “Church Father” is given to the saint who has fulfilled the conditions of holiness, so to speak—that is, who has been deified, united with God, and become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. He is included among the Church Fathers if, in addition to holiness, he possesses the ability to teach and defend the faith. Therefore, we find that most of the Church Fathers, the teachers, were highly proficient in both the sciences of this world and the of life in Christ.

These great saints studied and mastered the most important sciences of their time, and simultaneously, they lived with God. They harnessed the high secular sciences to serve the propagation of spiritual sciences, that is, life with the Lord, so that they became pure instruments in which the Holy Spirit dwells. There were Fathers who, through their spiritual and worldly knowledge, were able to convey the Gospel of Christ in the language of their time; that is, they spoke of Christ to the people of their era through their culture, concepts and terms so that they could understand. And there were spiritual fathers who progressed in their relationship with God and were enlightened by Him, becoming vessels of the Holy Spirit, and He spoke through them. Some remained unknown, others became known through their guidance, and some were clearly revealed by God after their passing. There are examples of such fathers even today, from all these categories.

The common characteristic we observe in the Holy Fathers, whose writings we study, is that they possessed the worldly culture of their time and were known for their intellect. Saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian, and Maximus the Confessor, to name but a few, possessed brilliant minds and a high level of worldly culture. But this intellectual aspect was not separate from an enlightened heart enriched by the Holy Spirit. They were authentic teachers, and at the same time, they were sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

It is essential to remember this point because we are always susceptible to being drawn to one extreme or the other. We see currents that emphasize knowledge and others that emphasize a life of piety. The Fathers were not extreme in either direction, but gave each side its due, teaching that virtue lies in the middle ground between two extremes. Thus, the requirement of holiness was present among them alongside the requirement of secular knowledge.

A deeper examination of this phenomenon is necessary because the Christian world, in general, is witnessing an unbridled focus on reason, "scientific research" and "academia." These things are not inherently bad, for Christianity must address modern man in his own language, not in a language he does not understand, otherwise the Gospel will be lost. However, the problem arises when this focus is placed at the expense of life in Christ. Then we fall into the trap of acquiring what is called today "religious sciences," and the issue becomes cultural, not experiential.

Therefore, we observe, from time to time, conflicting currents within the Church, some emphasizing only the spiritual life, and others focusing exclusively on Christian culture and thought. This conflict may be overt or covert. The need remains crucial to cultivate a patristic sensibility that allows us to read them correctly and understand the spirit of their approach, not merely its letter.

It is essential to understand here that most of the Church Fathers were not academic professors in the modern sense of the word, but rather pastors, preachers, spiritual guides, physicians of the soul who treated people's spiritual ailments, or defenders of the faith against heresies. Much of their writing consists of articles or educational sermons addressed to the congregation, or apologetics explaining the Orthodox faith, demonstrating deviations from it and confronting heresies. Most of these writings were transcribed directly by their listeners. The Church Fathers did not deal exclusively with an intellectual elite, nor did they seek purely religious knowledge, although some of them, depending on their circumstances, engaged in dialogues or debates with philosophers or intellectuals, bearing witness to their faith. Their aim was to help people attain the fullness of Christ's stature. Through this sense of the importance of nurturing and educating

people to become like Christ, the Fathers defended the faith, explained the Bible, and confronted the challenges of the age.

The Church Fathers were not interested in transmitting abstract knowledge but rather delved into the details of people's lives. Saint John Chrysostom, for example, speaks in his sermons about theaters, costumes, and the minutiae of their daily lives, connecting all these points to sound Christian morality. The goal, therefore, was not to write books, but to lead people to the fullness of Christ's stature. Those who study the Gospel may misunderstand it; therefore, it is essential to understand its interpretation so that believers can live it.

The mental makeup of people today has become more focused on knowledge than on living it. Modern man approaches God with his intellect, not his heart. Schools of faith and theology have always existed, and sermons have been fundamental to worship services since the beginning of Christianity. The error lies not in seeking religious knowledge, but in pursuing it without concern for its application and lived experience. Believers today, due to the ease of information dissemination, are susceptible to the temptation of seeking religious knowledge more than living it, and this leads to the inflation of the intellect at the expense of the heart, rendering the religious institution dry and lifeless. Isn't this one of the reasons why so many are turning to monasteries in search of a living, not a packaged, faith? Indeed, many are now seeking inner peace in religious practices from the Far East devoid of Christ.

The benefit would be far greater if we helped people live in Christ and share His teachings in an understandable way, rather than simply filling them with religious information.

## في آباء الكنيسة

بقلم المطران سابا اسبر

في الكنيسة قديسون كثير، لكنهم لا يدعى جميعهم «آباء الكنيسة». يُطلق هذا اللقب على فئة معينة منهم. يُعتبر أباً كل شخص قادر على أن ينمي أشخاصاً في المسيح؛ أن يلدهم ويربّيهم. من هنا، يُطلق هذا اللقب على القديس الذي حقق شروط القداسة، إذا جاز التعبير، أي تأله واتّحد بالله وصار مسكناً للروح القدس، ويُدرج بين "آباء الكنيسة"، إذا ما تمتع، بالإضافة إلى القداسة، بالقدرة على التعليم والدفاع عن الإيمان. لذا، نجد أنّ معظم آباء الكنيسة المعلمين كانوا يتقنون، على نحو رفيع، علوم هذه الدنيا وعلوم الحياة في المسيح معاً.

هؤلاء القديسون الكبار درسوا أهم علوم عصرهم وأتقنوها، وكانوا يعيشون مع الله في الوقت ذاته. فسَخروا العلوم الدنيوية الرفيعة لخدمة التبشير بالعلوم الروحية، أي الحياة مع الربّ، بحيث صاروا أدوات ظاهرة يسكن فيها الروح القدس. ثمّة آباء معلّمون، استطاعوا بسبب علومهم الروحية والدنيوية، أن يسكبوا بشارة المسيح في لغة العصر الذي عاشوه، أي تكلموا على المسيح لأبناء زمنهم بلغتهم، حتّى يتمكن هؤلاء من فهمها. وثمّة آباء رُوحيون، تقدموا في الحياة مع الله واستناروا به، فصاروا آوانٍ للروح القدس، الذي تكلم من خلالهم. بقي بعضهم مجهولاً، وعُرف آخرون بإرشادهم، ومنهم من كشفه الله بوضوح من بعد رقادهم. ثمّة نماذج حتّى اليوم من كلّ الفئات.

الصفة المشتركة التي نلاحظها لدى الآباء المعلمين، الذين نتلمذ على كتاباتهم، هي أنّه كانت لديهم ثقافة زمنهم العالمية وعُرفوا بذكائهم. فالقديسون باسيليوس الكبير، ويوحنا الذهبيّ الفم، وغريغوريوس اللاهوتيّ، ومكسيموس المعترف، على سبيل المثال لا الحصر، كانوا يملكون عقولاً نيّرة، وثقافةً عالميةً رفيعة. لكنّ هذا الجانب العقليّ لم يكن منفصلاً عن القلب المستنير المغتنيّ بالروح القدس. كانوا معلّمين أصيلين، كما كانوا، في الوقت عينه، متقدّسين حاصلين على نعمة الروح القدس.

من الضروريّ أن نتذكّر هذه النقطة، لأننا معرّضون دوماً إلى خطر الانجذاب إلى طرف دون الآخر. نشهد حالياً تيارات تشدّد على المعرفة، وتيارات أخرى تشدّد على حياة التقوى. لم يكن الآباء متطرّفين، لا في هذه ولا في تلك، بل أعطوا لكلّ جانب حقّه، وعلموا بأنّ الفضيلة هي الوسط بين تطرفين. فكان شرط القداسة موجوداً لديهم، إلى جانب شرط العلوم الدنيويّة.

التعمّق في هذه الظاهرة ضروريّ، لأنّ العالم المسيحيّ، بعامّة، يشهد تركيزاً جامحاً على العقل و«البحث العلميّ» و«الأكاديميّة». ليست هذه الأمور سيئة بحدّ ذاتها، لأنّ على المسيحيّة أن تخاطب إنسان العصر وأن تخاطبه بلغته، لا بلغة لا يفهمها، وإلا اندثرت البشارة. ولكنّ السوء يظهر عندما يُحصر التركيز في هذا الأمر على حساب الحياة في المسيح. آنذاك نقع في فخ الحصول على ما يُسمى اليوم بالعلوم الدينيّة، فتغدو القضية ثقافية، لا حياتية.

لذلك، نلاحظ، من حين إلى آخر، وجود تيارات متصارعة في الكنيسة، بعضها يشدّد على الحياة الروحيّة فقط، وبعضها على الثقافة والفكر المسيحيين حصراً. قد يظهر هذا الصراع إلى العلن، وقد يكون خفياً. وتبقى الحاجة ماسة إلى اكتساب الوجدان الأبائي الذي يسمح لنا بقراءة تهمة الصحيحة، وفهم روح منهجهم، لا حرفه.

من الضروري هنا أن نعرف أنّ معظم الآباء لم يكونوا أساتذة أكاديميين بالمعنى المعاصر لكلمة "أكاديميا"، بل رعاةً ووعاظاً أو مرشدين روحيين وأطباء نفوس يعالجون أمراض الناس الروحية، أو مدافعين عن الإيمان تجاه الهرطقات. الكثير من كتاباتهم مقالات أو عظات تربوية موجّهة إلى الرعية أو دفاعية تشرح الإيمان المستقيم وتبين الانحراف عنه وتواجه الهرطقات، ومعظم كتاباتهم دُونها السامعون مباشرة. لم يتعامل الآباء مع نخبة مثقّفة حصراً، ولم يطلبوا العلم الدينيّ المحض، وإن كان بعضهم، بحسب ظروفهم، قد دخلوا في حوارات أو سجلات مع بعض الفلاسفة أو المثقفين، بداعي الشهادة لإيمانهم. هدفهم مساعدة الناس في الوصول إلى ملء قامة المسيح. عبر هذا الحسّ بأهميّة رعاية الناس وتربيتهم ليصبحوا على صورة المسيح، كان الآباء يدافعون عن الإيمان، ويشرحون الكتاب المقدّس، ويواجهون تحدّيات العصر.

ما كان الآباء مهتمين بنقل المعرفة المجردة، بل غاصوا في تفاصيل حياة الناس. فالقديس يوحنا الذهبي الفم، مثلاً، يتكلم، في عظاته، على المسارح والأزياء ودقائق حياة المؤمنين، ويربط كل هذه النقاط بالأخلاق المسيحية السليمة. لم يكن الهدف، إذن، تأليف الكتب، بل إيصال الناس إلى ملء قامة المسيح. فمن يدرس الإنجيل قد يُخطئ فهمه، لذلك لا بد من معرفة تفسير الإنجيل حتى يتمكن المؤمنون من عيشه.

نمط التكوين العقلي للبشر اليوم بات يطلب المعرفة أكثر مما يطلب عيشها. يقارب الإنسان المعاصر الله بعقله، لا بقلبه. كانت مدارس تعليم الإيمان أو اللاهوت موجودة دائماً، وكذلك العظات كانت أساسية في خدمات العبادة منذ بدء المسيحية. لا يكمن الخطأ في طلب المعرفة الدينية، بل في السعي إليها دون الاهتمام بتطبيقها وعيشها. المؤمنون اليوم، بحكم سهولة انتشار المعلومات، معرّضون إلى تجربة طلب العلوم الدينية أكثر من طلب عيشها، وهذا ما يؤدي إلى تضخم العقل على حساب القلب، فتغدو المؤسسة الدينية جافة لا حياة فيها. أليس هذا ما يفسر أحد أسباب توجّه الكثيرين إلى الأديرة طلباً لإيمان حيّ، لا مُعلّب. لا بل بات كثيرون يطلبون سلاماً داخلياً في ممارسات دينية، من الشرق الأقصى، خالية من المسيح. تكون الفائدة أكبر إذا ساعدنا الناس على عيش المسيح ونقله في شكل مفهوم، لا حشوهم بالمعلومات الدينية.

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